OHP Form 6

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Narrator Miss Jeannette Lyons

Interviewer Phyllis Lotz

Place S.Y.V. Historical Museum

Date Sunday, August 19, 1979

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Interview with Miss Jeannette Lyons, Interview 1
Date of Interview: 18 August 1979, Ballard, California
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: I'd like to ask you about your parents and why they came to Ballard

Lyons: My father's people came from north of Ireland. Originally the Lyons came from the city of Lyons, France. During the Huguenot persecution they fled to a place where they thought they would have freedom of religion. They came to the north of Ireland and settled in County Londonderry and County Down. His mother's people, the Wrays came originallyfrom Denmark where the name was probably Bra. They were presumably Vikings. They came first to the Lake Country of England where they built a castle called Castle Wray, which still stands and is now a boys school. Then they went to the north of Ireland where the Lyons family had settled. After settling in Pennsylvania the Lyons married into the Wray family. My father's parents died when the boys were quite young, there were four boys. They were brought up by an Aunt Margaret Lyons who had been born in Ireland. We have a portrait of one of Father's uncles, Uncle Nathanial Lyons, a Presbyterian minister.

PL: Do you recall the year that the Lyons came to America?

Lyons: No, I could not tell you. But they were brought up on a farm. Aunt Margaret was very severe with the boys.

My father could quote more bible that any minister I knew. He was brought up very strickly in the Presbyterian faith. His aunt was very upset when my father married a Methodist (my mother). Aunt Margaret thought Father was going right to perdition because he married a Methodist, but Mother joined the Presbyterian Church. Mother's people had an ancestor named Flora McDonald. Flora McDonald is famous in Scottish history as having saved the life of Prince Charlie. Prince Charles had been deposed and in trying to regain the throne of England became a fugitive when Flora McDonald disguised him as her servant, rowed him across the lake and stayed at her home. Flora McDonald migrated to America later and brought with her the sheets in which Prince Charlie slept. She was subsequently wrapped in those sheets when she died and was buried on the Isle of Sky, a possession of the McDonald family. My ancester, a cousin of Flora McDonald came to America just shortly be= fore the Revolutionary War. He landed in Canada, and spent many years there before coming to Pennsylvania. My mother's father was born in England, his name was Wilson. Many of his desendants have what is known as the 'Wilson Mark.' A little nitch in the ear. Several of my family have the mark. James Wilson settled in Penn. and married Rachel McDonald. He operated a woolen mill not far from Pittsburg. They had five daughters, my mother being one. Mother attended a school for teachers in California, Penn. and became a teacher and taught school until she met my father.

Mother and Father had six children, four being born in Penn. in a town called West Elizabeth.

Mother's sister had married a druggist named Smith who had contracted tuberculosis. Mr. Smith came to Calif. for his health, settled in the community of Ballard, and liked it so well, sent glowing reports about California and Father got California Fever. The Smiths built a Victorian house between Ballard and Los Olivos that still stands(The Hopsons live in it now). Father and Mother had just built a new brick house so Mother was loath to leave it but being a good wife decided to yield to Fathers wishes to come to California. The family took the train to San Francisco. This was in 1882. There was no dining car on the train so they brought their food, and Father would get off a different stops to buy supplies. December 1882, they took the old steamship to Gaviota. On this Dec. day it was so hot, and the dust was knee deep from lack of rain. Father wanted to turn back, but Mother said, " Sam, you have burned your bridges, we stay!" My uncle, Joe Smith met the family in a surry at Gaviota taking Mother and Father and the two girls with him, while the two boys rode to Ballard in an empty freight wagon with the luggage. Father bought 20 acres of land from a black-smith named Hubbard and built a two-story house where I was born in 1886. There were no stores or post office in the conmunity, it was very primitive in those days. Father did some farming on this land, and gave one acre to the community for a cemetery. Up to this time people buried their dead on their own property. Two other men also

gave one acre to what is now Oak Hill Cemetery.

PL: Your Father was from a farming people, so what sort of crops did he raise in Ballard?

Lyons: They raised grains and corn.

PL: And he wasn't unhappy too leave for the west?

Lyons: Oh, he was thrilled to start for the west, he had gotten Calif. Fever and immediately thought he was coming to the land of milk and honey.

PL: What were the names of the four children?

Lyons: The oldest child was William McGogenie. He was named for a very good friend who later became a brother-in-law. Grace Wilson, who married Edgar Davison. George Washington, who became a Forest Supervison, then Alice Margaret, who married a high school teacher and became Mrs. Potter. Then I came along in 1886, Rachel Jeannette, and Sam, Jr. in 1889, and that completed the family.

PL: Did you ever meet Mr. George Lewis?

Lyons: I don't remember him, I do remember Mrs. Lewis. Mr. and Lewis were separated for a good many years because of Mr. Lewis's gambling. He gambled away all his land, everything he possessed and went to live in Mexico for a number of years. I knew Mrs. Lewis and her daughter, Mildred very well.

PL: Is Mr. Lewis the actual founder of Ballard?

Lyons: Mr. Lewis is definately the founder of Ballard. He gave the land for Ballard, the land he inherited from Mr. Ballard He built the community of Ballard in honor of his partner William Nixon Ballard after Ballard's death in 1870. But it wasn't until 1880 that the town was founded. William

Ballardbuilt the adobes between Ballard and Los Olivos in 1860 as an overnight stage passenger stop. He ran a stage line from San Francisco and Arizona. And there was and still is a office where they kept the treasures. called the Wells-Fargo Room, and the adobes have been beautifully restored. I just learned something most interesting, just across the way from the adobes at the corner of Grand Ave. and Santa Barbara Streets in Los Olivos, was another adobe built by Mr. Ballard that he used to stable his horses. Ferd. Sorensen told me that after a fire of about 15 years ago, the repair men found the names of all the men who took care of the horses scratched on the walls of this adobe.

PL: Who lives there now?

Lyons: The adobe burned down not long ago, and the Hollisters (Charles) rebuilt on the site.

PL: Your uncle, Joe Smith was the first of your family to settle here, how did he learn about Ballard?

Lyons: He came to California for his health, he took a long walking trip to Yosemite Valley. Slept out in the open and entirely recovered from T.B. He lived to be 85 years old. He came to the area in the late 1870's.

PL: Who lives in your uncle's old home on Alamo Pintado?

Lyons: The Hopsons, but it has gone through many hands. It was from my uncle that Mr. A.M.Boyd bought it. A.M.. Boyd and a partner from S.F. Mr. Selby bought the property and planted olives there. They also built an olive mill for oil on what is now the Duff property, near Mission Santa Ines.

PL: I have often wondered how Ballard became public land with

the two large land grants on either side. The San Carlos de Jonata on the west, and the Canada de Los Pinos on the east. It was surveyed probably by Mr. Lewis himself in the 1850's after California became a state and that little strip became public land.

PL: So thats how Mr. Ballard acquired the land.

Lyons: We have a copy of Mr. Ballard's will at the Historical Museum.

PL: What did Ballard look like when you were young?

Lyons: As I remember it there was a post master in 1885, a year before my birth. I do remember the old post office on the corner of Lewis St. and Baseline Ave. There was an old tumbled down house near there where a man named Hank Stewart lived. He had married an Indian woman from Sanja De Cota Reservation and the story goes that she had had her ears cut off so she wore her hair long, her black hair. We children always peared in their house to see if we could see the woman with the cut off ears. They lived just opposite the store run by my Uncle Joe's sister Aunt Jenny. Mrs. Scneider lives ther now. Aunt Jenny was a typical old maid, alto she later married. I remember one incident about Aunt Jenny's store: My father, being a strick Presbyterian, did not shop on Sundays but this day he had had to spank my brother, Sam, and Father felt so badly about that, he went to the store and bought Sam an orange. When I was 8 or 9, our house burned down from the explosion of a kerocene lamp. In those days there was no fire fighters so very little was saved. Although

we were poor, we alwasy had books in the house. Father read aloud to Mother as she knitted: Dickens was her favorite. One night, we had the tea kettle dancing on the stove, and I said as a very small child, "Copper-field is dancing." Anyway they saved some of my dolls and they were out in the garden for the insurance man to check. I wept so because my dolls were left outside. We moved to a place until the house was rebuilt, Father was a carpenter and he rebuilt our house on the same site, two storied. Then in 1915, the house burned again. Because of a kerocene stove, so kerocene played a big part in our lives. I was teaching at the time, and Mr. Ibsen of Solvang rebuilt the house only one storied this time as Father and Mother were getting old.

PL: Tell me about your Father? He was a farmer and carpenter, so how did he become the judge of the area?

Lyons: We needed a judge and Father was known for his integrity and his fine mind, and as a leading citizen of the valley. He was elected and remained judge for 50 years.

PL: When he had legel work to do, did the people come to your house or to an office?

Lyons: They came to our house, we had marriages in our front room, some shot-gun marriages, alot from the Indian Reservation and Father prided himself on the shortest of marriages,"May God have merry on your soles." Father had a great sense of humor, and he knew more poetry than anyone I knew. He could quote Robert Burns by the hour, and Mother loved Dickens. We always had magazines and books in the house, a good library. I was a sickly

so all the socials and church doings, pot-lucks took place at our house and Mother was very interested in missions as she belonged to the Missionary Society. She and Father went to conventions in Ventura, and that was when Alice and Grace were old enought to take care of Sam and me. When I was 12, and Sam, 9, Father and Mother went east to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg. They felt Sam and I should have olderpeople to take care of us so for a month we were in Vertura at friends.

PL: Speaking of 8 loafs of bread every day, I wonder how a woman got throught the day with all her duties?

Lyons: I don't know, but Mother always had time to lay down each afternoon to rest and we all had to keep quiet. It was required. She was a wonderful cook, but never had cooked until she married. The one thing she did not do was sew. My sisters, Grace and Alice sewed and made all my chothes.

PL: Did you have a sewing machine or sew by hand?

Lyons: Oh, we had a sewing machine. And we had either an organ or piano. We wer called the "Singing Lyons." Alice played the piano and we gathered around and sang songs on the front porch. Mother entertained all the preachers. All the hungry preachers. I remember the first Episcopal minister, he came from Lompoc, named Julian Monkford, an Englishman, and he knew more limerics.

PL: Do you remember Mamie Goulet?

Lyons: Oh, yes. And I remember her sister who taught school in San Luis Obispo when I taught there. I remember Mamie's uncle, Father Buckler. Ugg! He was an old so and so. A friend of mine would not let her daughter go to confession

year then went to USC to law school where he met his future wife, Ruth Black. He returned to the valley and practiced law but he loved the out-of-doors, so when he had a chance he went into Fish and Game and became Captain of Patrol at Sacramento.

PL: What about Grace and Alice?

Lyons: Grace married Edgar Davison. He came to the valley when he was 16 a very charming person. She had taught school here. Edgar was one of the first forest rangers. He played the piano for our church for 50 years. They had five children, four boys, one girl. Alice married a teacher, Mr. Frank Potter, after taking some classes at high school. They had three children. Grace took care of me when I was young, and I really had two mothers. George called me "Kitten" a most unappropriate name. Sam and I used to have such imaginary games when we were going to high school. I was taking Shakespere, and we put on these plays. Sam took the part of Juliette, because I wanted to play Rpmeo. He changed the words in our play to suit himself and used to make me mad. We had wonderful times together, all my family.

PL: The tape is over, so thank you very much for the interview.

Lyons: I hope I havn't bored you to death.

alone, and he drank terribly. He and Mr. Janin used to try to drink each other under the table.

PL: What schools did you and your sisters and brothers go to?

Lyons: William started in the school held in an old saloon, befor the Ballard schoolhouse was built. And also in Mr. Lewis' granery. After the school house was built in 1883, he went there. Mother's sister Anna Wilson taught there. One of the first pupils at Ballard was Ira Smith, who later became a page at Congress and then post master at the White House for fifty years. He wrote a book, "My Fifty Years at the White House."

PL: After 8 years at Ballard, what happened?

Lyons: There was no high school then, so you went away to school. But those 8 years were a through education. We had Arithmetic, Mental Arithmetic, reading and grammer, and geography, civil government, botany, spelling, history and Physilogy. Then we had to pass a county exam. There was a fence down the middle of the playing field, the boys on one side the girls on the other. I finished school in 6 years. My father was still learning poems at age 94

PL: Did William go on to higher education?

Lyons: Yes, he studyed law with a judge in San Luis. Then he got a form of small pox that effected his eyes, and had to give up the law. He went on to become a teacher and in later years was a storekeeper in Cambria.

PL: What about George?

Lyons: George went on to UC Berleley, graduated ther and went on to Ann Arbor, Mich where he took forestry courses. He became a Forest Supervisor in Modoc County and Nevada City, Calif. Sam, my younger brother went to Berkeley a